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FLICKE: The German Intercept Station in Madrid.

1. The attached is an Army Security Agency translation of a paper written by Wilhelm FLICKE, formerly chief evaluator and the officialy designated historian of the Signal Intelligence Agency of the Supreme Command German Amred Forces.

2. The present paper, German title:" Die deutsche Horchstelle in Madrid", is an interesting account of German activity in "neutral" Spain. It may be noted that this activity antedated the Franco regime.

3. This paper is particularly interesting because it is possible in this instance to check and confirm all of the essential details given by FLICKE from other accounts of German intercept activity in Spain available in TICOM, see European Axis Signal Intelligence in World War II as Revealed by TICOM Investigations and by Other Prisoner of war Interrogations and Captured Material, Principally German, volume III," The Signal Intelligence Agency of the Supreme Command, Armed Forces", pp 39 ff. After this account was written an interrogation of the repatriated personnel of the "Bureau Plankert" carried out in Germany, was received through the Department of State (IF 266) which independently corroborates FLICKE and the original TICOM interrogations. FLICKE's knowledge that the intercept personnel had been repatriated in 1946 is significant of his continuing contacts with his former associates.

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2 June 1948

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FLICKE: The German Intercept Station in Madrid

The idea of setting up an intercept station for the purposes of OKW on Spanish territory was certainly very old; Lt-Captain Hans Schimpf(see the chapter on the "Forschungsamt") already in 1930 had set up a small station on a hacienda near Barcelona which worked for the Naval "B" Service. This station was in operation with only slight interruptions up to the Spanish Civil War.

During the Civil War the German Intercept Service was able to gain a great deal of practical experience in Spain. This land seemed particularly suitable to supply a good base.

The organizational and technical preparations were begun in the summer of 1939. By the beginning of August things had advanced so far that the Madrid intercept Station was able to begin operations. It was unobtrusively located in two villas in the Ciudad Lineal (southwest of Madrid) in the middle of a small garden. [A penciled footnote states "Villa 'La Casa'"].

The staff of both stations consisted of about 16 to 20 radio operators who were assigned from the Lauf and Treuenbrietzen intercept stations [of OKW]. Eight radio receivers served for the intercept work, they were not all constantly employed but were used according to need.

For camouflage all the rooms in which the listening service was situated were designated as "sitting rooms". The sets used were all of foreign manufacture, mostly American "Hallicraft"[sic] and generally had the appearance of broadcast receivers and appeared completely "neutral".

The mission of the Madrid station was to listen to the French, Belgian and Portuguese colonial traffic, later Swiss and North American traffic and English transmitters for inter Dominion traffic were assigned which could be heard only

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with difficulty at Lauf and Treuenbrietzen.

It soon became evident that in Madrid many of these stations could be only partially covered. For this reason three subordinate stations were set up in 1940 and the following years:

1). Seville, for reception of North African Colonial radio traffic (Algeria, Morocco, West Africa). Staff of about 8 men.

2). Barcelona, for monitoring naval radio traffic in the Mediterranean and Atlantic. This was the mission of the old station founded by Schimpf.
Staff of about 10 men.

3). Las Palmas (Teneriffe) for duty in the field of monitoring additional Portugese colonial transmitters, French West Africa Army radio stations and specific transmitters in international communications.
It was staffed with four radio operators with two receivers.

For processing the material received from these four intercept stations an evaluation center and intercept control center was set up in the German Consulate in Madrid staffed by four men who were Germans resident in Spain. From here there was a teleprinter connection through Irun and Bordeaux to the Cipher Section in Berlin for sending the results of evaluation and important individual messages. For this and for written communications the following cover names were used:

The Intercept organization in Spain was called "Stuermer".

The Cipher Section in Berlin was called the "Commercial Section"/Commerz-abteilung/.

The two Madrid intercept stations passed their material daily to the Evaluation Center.

Seville and Barcelona sent their material every two days by courier.

Las Palmas sent its intercept twice weekly by air to Seville who sent it along with its own traffic to Madrid.

The Madrid Evaluation Center also received cable telegrams from an official

of the Spanish Post; these consisted of copies of the cipher telegrams of the foreign diplomatic missions accredited to Spain; there is very little doubt that other powers concerned bought copies of cable messages desired.

At the end of 1940 the following radio connections were set up:

A. The Madrid Intercept Station and the Cipher Section in Berlin. (The transmitter was later located in the German consulate building).

B. Madrid and the Seville Intercept Station

C. Madrid and the Barcelona Intercept Station

D. Madrid and the Las Palmas Intercept Station

These radio connections were not used to pass the results of intercept but only for control of intercept, or the report by the station concerned that "all was well".

Occasionally there were persons who took the view that things were by no means "in order" in the houses concerned and instigated an "investigation" by the Spanish police. The police each time scrupulously - but without particular haste - took up the matter and made a different search of the houses. As a result of the "climatic" conditions in Spain, however, the investigations always came with a "favorable" wind. Thus the small villas always made a seemingly harmless impression and the four American broadcast receivers were ostensibly "explained" as due to the great interest of the owner of the house in news broadcasts and radio music.

The Air Ministry had also set up an intercept station near by. The Naval High Command similarly had an intercept station located in a different section of Madrid. The total strength of personnel at all stations combined was about 60 heads.

The intercept station erected in Las Palmas appeared fairly unprofitable

from the beginning. After the American landing in North Africa the direct air connection with Seville was discontinued; the Americans were plainly ready to interfere with air traffic and force the planes to make an intermediate landing in Casablanca. As Casablanca was occupied by American troops such an intermediate landing made use of air delivery unthinkable. For a while an attempt was made to continue forwarding the traffic with Spanish boat captains as intermediaries, however this fell through in January 1943 and the station was brought back.

The head of the "Stuermer" organization from 1940 to the spring of 1942 was Major von Nida who was then recalled to the Cipher Section in Berlin. The head of the subordinate station at Seville until June, 1944 was Lieutenant Eichner who then went to Livourne in France as head of the station there.

The last head of the intercept service in Madrid was 1st Lt. Plankert who worked out of the consulate in Madrid. For the last year and a half the station itself was in the charge of Oberwachtmeister Bell (from the Lauf intercept station). Plankert was in civilian clothes - as were all the other personnel of the station, and was known as "Dr" Plankert.

Seville and Barcelona were closed down in the summer of 1944 after the landing of the Allies in Northern France; only Madrid remained.

This station operated up to May 1945. Its closing down then took place. The personnel received an extra half years pay and were left to shift for themselves. In February 1946 they, along with other German citizens in Spain, were transported on an English vessel to Hamburg. A few of them remained behind. The equipment was turned over to the Spanish armed forces in May 1945.